

## Message Text

SECRET

PAGE 01 TEL AV 02412 061149Z  
ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 /026 W  
-----061258Z 082657 /43

R 061116Z APR 77  
FM AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5589  
INFO AMEMBASSY BEIRUT  
AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS  
USMISSION USUN

S E C R E T TEL AVIV 2412

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS  
TAGS: PFOR, PINS, LE, IS, SY  
SUBJECT: SOUTH LEBANON SITUATION

REF: BEIRUT 1506

1. WHILE I AGREE WITH AMBASSADOR PARKER THAT THE ISRAELI REPOSE TO OUR QUESTIONS ON SOUTH LEBANON SEEMS "DOMEWHAT DISINGENUOUS," IT SHOULD BE POINTED OUT THAT THIS REPLY WAS CAREFULLY AND DELIBERATELY DRAFTED AND WAS APPROVED BY FOREIGN MINISTER ALLON, IF NOT BY PRIME MINISTER RABIN HIMSELF.

2. IT MAY BE TRUE THAT THERE IS NO EVIDENCE THAT SYRIA WANTS TO TURN LEBANON INTO A "CONFRONTATION STATE" BUT THIS SUSPICION HAS BEEN VERY STRONG HERE EVER SINCE SYRIAN TROOPS ENTERED LEBANON. THE ISRAELIS ARE HAUNTED BY THE SPECTER OF RENEWED TERRORIST INCURSIONS FROM LEBANON AIDED AND ABETTED BY SYRIAN FORCES. AVINERI, IN FACT, TOLD ME APRIL 5 THAT THE GOI HAD DELIBERATELY DECIDED AND PUBLICIZED SEVERAL MONTHS AGO THAT, IN A CHOICE BETWEEN EVILS, IT WOULD PREFER THE TERRORISTS

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ALONG ITS NORTHERN BORDER RATHER THAN THE SYRIANS. IT HAD BEEN RECOGNIZED AT THE TIME, HOWEVER, THAT THIS WAS A RISK. NOW THEY MAY BE ABOUT TO LEARN WHETHER THE RISK WAS WORTH TAKING. (COMMENT: WITH THE SYRIANS ON THE BORDER THERE WOULD HAVE BEEN NO HOPE OF ESTABLISHING A CORDON SANITAIRE, WHICH SEEMS TO HAVE BEEN VERY NEAR COMPLETION UNTIL THE RECENT FLARE-UP AT TAYBEH.

NOW THE "RISK" ELEMENT ENTERS IN: HOW FAR WILL THE ISRAELIS WANT TO GO IN AIDING THEIR CHRISTIAN FRIENDS?)

3. THERE ARE MANY ISRAELI SETTLEMENTS IN THE NORTH SNUG ALONG THE LEBANESE BORDER. IN FACT SHELLS FIRED FROM INSIDE LEBANON APRIL 4 FELL NEAR KIBBUTZ MISGAV AM, AND ISRAELI ARTILLERYMEN IMMEDIATELY COUNTERED WITH "SEVERAL ROUNDS" OF THEIR OWN. A RIPOSTE OF THIS NATURE IS ALMOST AUTOMATIC IN SUCH A SITUATION - NO QUESTIONS ASKED.

4. AS AMBASSADOR PARKER RIGHTFULLY POINTS OUT (PARA 7 OF REFTTEL), THE ISRAELIS PREFER A CONTINUATION OF THE PRESENT SITUATION, SHORT-SIGHTED THOUGH IT MAY BE, TO ANY OTHER SITUATION THEY SEE AS LIKELY. I AM AFRAID THAT ALMOST ANY COUNSEL WE GIVE THEM ABOUT THE UNWISDOM OF THEIR POLICY WILL BE AT BEST SHRUGGED OFF OR IGNORED AND AT WORST BRING A NEGATIVE AND COUNTER-PRODUCTIVE RESPONSE WHICH WOULD DO LITTLE TO ADVANCE CONDITIONS FOR FORWARD MOVEMENT ON EITHER THE LEBANESE OR THE OVERALL ARAB-ISRAELI PROBLEMS.

5. I AGREE IT MAY BE USEFUL TO PASS THE GIST OF THE ISRAELI REPOSE TO FOREIGN MINISTER BOUTROS AND TO SEEK HIS RESPONSE TO IT. BEFORE THAT IS DONE, HOWEVER, I WOULD LIKE PERMISSION TO TELL EVRON THAT WE PLAN TO DO SO.

DUNNIGAN

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**Review Markings:**  
Margaret P. Grafeld  
Declassified/Released  
US Department of State  
EO Systematic Review  
22 May 2009  
**Markings:** Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009